

Message Text

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S E C R E T AMMAN 2026

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, SA, XF

SUBJECT: TALK WITH KING ON FAISAL ASSASSINATION

1. SUMMARY: KING CONCERNED ABOUT NUMBER OF POSSIBLE "COINCIDENCES" IN MURDER OF FAISAL. RIFAI SAYS QUITE FRANKLY THAT MANY ARAB ATTENDEES AT RIYADH BURIAL WERE SUSPICIOUS AND THAT US HAD BECOME AN OBJECT OF SUCH SUSPICIONS. KING ANXIOUS TO KNOW IF WE CAN SHED ANY FURTHER LIGHT ON WHAT HAPPENED AND MOST PARTICULARLY ON BACK-FOUND OF KING FAISAL'S ASSASSIN. HE PROVIDES SOME DETAILS GATHERED DURING HIS VISIT TO RIYADH YESTERDAY. END SUMMARY.

2. KING PROVIDED FOLLOWING INFORMATION ON FAISAL ASSASSINATION. WHERE INDICATED RIFAI ADDED SOME SEPARATE DETAILS AND AS NOTED IN PART THESE DIFFERED FROM WHAT KING HAD TO SAY. I DID NOT ASK, BUT I PRESUME KING ACQUIRED THIS INFORMATION FROM TALKS WHICH HE HAD WITH NUMBER OF "YOUNGER SAUDI PRINCES" DURING THE VISIT.

3. ASSASSIN IS STILL ALIVE AND BEING HELD BY SAUDIS FOR INTER-ROGATION CONTRARY TO SOME NEWS REPORTS. KING SAYS THAT FATHER (PRINCE MUS'AD) IS UNBALANCED (RIFAI SAID HE IS AN ALCOHOLIC), BUT THAT THERE WAS REAL MOTIVE. ASSASSIN'S ELDER BROTHER WAS RELIGIOUS FANATIC AND SOMEWHAT UNBALANCED AND SOME YEARS AGO LED AN ATTACK ON TV STATION AND WAS KILLED IN FIGHTING. ASSASSIN HAD BEEN KEPT AWAY FROM KING BECUASE OF FEAR OF REVENGE (RIFAI INDICATED THAT HE HAD HAD PAST OPPORTUNITIES TO SHOOT FAISAL), HAD BEEN GIVEN MONEY TO STUDY IN COLORADO AND HAD RETURNED TO RIYADH

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WITH A DEGREE AND TAUGHT AT THE UNIVERSITY. FIVE DAYS AGO HE HAD

VISITED BEIRUT. ASSASSIN HAD BEEN MIXED UP IN DRUG USE OR TRAFFICING IN US OR UK, KING NOT SURE WHICH.

4. ASSASSIN HAD SLIPPED INTO VISITING KUWAITI DELEGATION AND GOTTEN INTO PALACE PAST WHATEVER SECURITY OFFICIALS EXISTED AND CONTRARY TO STANDING ORDERS TO KEEP HIM OUT. HE STOOD BEHIND THE LEADER OF THE KUWAITI DELEGATION IN LINE TO GREET FAISAL AND AS LEADER MOVED ASIDE HE HAD GUN IN HAND AND FIRED (FOUR TIMES ACCORDING TO RIFAI) AND HIT FAISAL IN THE HEAD KILLING HIM INSTANTLY. HE WAS ATTACKED AND PROBABLY WOULD HAVE BEEN KILLED AT PALACE, BUT SOME THINKING INDIVIDUAL PROTECTED HIM FROM BLOWS SO HE COULD BE QUESTIONEE.

5. THESIS AMONG MORE SUSPICIOUS ARABS, ACCORDING TO KING, IS THAT IF SOMEONE WANTED TO SPREAD TURMOIL IN THE AREA IT WOULD BE GOOD TIME TO REMOVE FAISAL. WHY WAS HE IN BEIRUT? USE OF MEMBER OF THE FAMILY WITH A MOTIVE COULD CERTAINLY HELP TO DEFUSE SUSPICION THAT HE WAS INVOLVED IN A CONSPIRACY. FACT THAT HE WAS NOT SUMMARILY EXECUTED AT PALACE ONLY A FLUKE AND IF HE HAD BEEN IT WOULD HAVE FURTHER MASKED THE CULPRIT(S) BEHIND THE SCENES.

6. RIFAI WAS MORE DIRECT. HE SAID THAT SOME WERE ALREADY CASTING SUSPICION ON US. THEY SAW "CONNECTION" OR "COINCIDENCE" BETWEEN THE SECRETARY'S DEPARTURE AND FAISAL'S ASSASSINATION. MANY ASKED IF US INTERESTS (AND POSSIBLY ALSO ISRAELI INTERESTS) WERE NOT SERVED BY FAISAL'S DEMISE. THE COMBINATIONS ARE ENDLESS.

7. KING SAID THAT ALL OF THIS MAY BE JUST TALK, BUT HE ASKED SPECIFICALLY IF WE COULD SHED ANY FURTHER LIGHT ON PROBLEM. HE NOTED THAT THEY HAVE A REPORT FROM EGYPT THAT SOMEONE REMOVED 180 RUNWAY LIGHTS FROM CAIRO AIRPORT BEFORE SADAT'S NIGHTTINE RETURN AND THAT OTHERS HAD BEEN ARRESTED FOR TAMPERING WITH AIRPORT EQUIPMENT. HE REMAINS CONCERNED THAT THERE IS EITHER A REAL POSSIBILITY THAT SOMETHING BIGGER IS HAPPENING, OR THAT OTHERS WILL CONCLUDE THAT IS THE CASE (AND HE DID NOT ADD THE US IS BEHIND IT ALL) WHICH IS ALMOST AS BAD. ANYTHING WHICH DEPARTMENT OR JIDDA CAN PASS ON TO CLARIFY SITUATION WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL HERE. OBVIOUSLY REGICIDE AND STORIES OF WIDER PLOT HAVE BUILT UP NERVOUSNESS IN AMMAN PALACE.

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